

**WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DIVISION &
GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM OFFICE
ALL BRANCH WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - WEEK ENDING 2/6/15**

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DIVISION

IMMEDIATE OFFICE

CONTINUED DELEGATION OF TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY'S AUTHORITY FOR PROGRAMATIC QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLANS (QAPPS) APPROVAL: Staff worked with individuals from the Assistance Programs, Ecosystems Protection, and the NPDES Permits and TMDL Branches in order to approve Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ's) request for delegation of several TCEQ programs. Both the Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) programs were reapproved to have their Quality Assurance Project Plan delegated, additionally both programs have been delegated since 2004 and 2007 (respectively). This means the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 (R6) delegates continued QAPP approval authority for TCEQ's TMDL and GBEP programs for a period of five years, based on these programs exceptional past QA activities. Thus, TCEQ now has authority for approving QAPPs within these two programs. TCEQ conducts required external and internal audits to ensure the State's quality system is maintained, and will continue to perform these types of assessments under this delegation. Internal audits of both programs were conducted in 2014, with the assistance of the EPA Region 6 Water Quality Assurance Officer. There are three delegated programs within the Region, and all three are in the Water Quality Division. The current delegations, for these two programs, will expire January 29, 2020. Contact: **Sala Senkayi, 665-6477; Don Johnson, 665-8343;**

ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS BRANCH

EPA R6 DETERMINES EL PASO LAND PURCHASE INELIGIBLE FOR DWSRF FUNDING: On January 21, 2015, the Texas Water Development Board sent the EPA Region 6 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program a Write-Up for the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board's proposed land purchase as a Source Water Protection project within the DWSRF program. The R6 DWSRF did not find it eligible for funding from the DWSRF program for numerous reasons, including the land would be used for *future* anticipated growth. Other issues making this land purchase ineligible is the lack of a priority setting process at TWDB, as well as the fact that the loan amount would exceed the allowable amount of Local (15%) set-aside funds available. The R6 DWSRF program also commented that a 'willing seller' for the 26,000 acres would be questionable, being that this acreage is over the Bone Springs Aquifer in Hudspeth County. "Rule of Capture" right in Texas is a very contentious issue at this time in this drought-prone area. The R6 DWSRF program is anticipating a rebuttal from TWDB on this determination of ineligibility. **Diane Taheri, 665-7460; Maurice Rawls, 665-8049; Javier Ballí, 665-7261**

ECOSYSTEMS PROTECTION BRANCH

FIELD LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH VICKSBURG DISTRICT: On January 30, 2015, the Associate Director of the Ecosystems Branch and the Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg

District, signed a Field Level Agreement to improve communication, establish a framework to strengthen the enforcement program, and to reduce overlapping work between the agencies. This is the fourth Field Level Agreement signed by the Corps with EPA, Region 6. The previous agreements are with the Albuquerque District, New Orleans District, and Memphis District. The Field Level Agreement will assist in establishing a process of communication between the Army Corps of Engineers and EPA to better coordinate the enforcement actions. **Wanda Boyd, 665-6696**

REGION 6 COMPLETES REVIEW OF OKLAHOMA DRAFT 303(D) LIST: Region 6 staff has completed its review of Oklahoma's draft 2014 303(d) list and submitted its comments to Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) for its consideration. The State posted its 303(d) list and integrated report to its website on December 31, 2014 for public comment. That public comment period has now closed and ODEQ will now move forward with finalizing the list. Formal submission of the final list to Region 6 should occur sometime early Spring 2015. **Mike Schaub, 665-7314**

REGION COMMENTS ON TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY'S (TCEQ) DRAFT 2014 INTEGRATED REPORT ON SURFACE WATER QUALITY: During the open comment period for the draft TX 2014 Integrated Report, regional staff submitted several clarification requests and comments regarding assessment methodologies and waterbody categorizations. TCEQ is currently addressing comments and plans to submit the final 2014 Integrated Report to EPA in mid-summer 2015. **Robert Cook, 555-7141; Mike Schaub, 665-7314; Diane Evans, 665- 6677**

EPA REGION 6 NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM AT THE OKLAHOMA WATER QUALITY DIVISION RETREAT: On January 28-29, 2015, staff from the Watershed Management (6WQ-EW) attended the Water Quality Division Retreat, in Keystone State Park, Oklahoma. Along with representatives from the EPA Region 6, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) Water Quality Division, along with their newly appointed Executive Director, Trey Lam, were in attendance. Discussion topics focused on how the OCC Water Quality Division carries out Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program funding, updates/changes to the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program, maintaining stakeholder focus, and strengthening the partnership between EPA and the OCC Water Quality Division. Topics were open for discussion and well received. **Mike Bira, 665-6668; Caitlain Thompson, 665-2262**

BAYOU DUPONT SEDIMENT DELIVERY MARSH CREATION #3 AND TERRACING PROJECT FINDING: The Marine & Coastal Section Chief will sign by February 6, 2015, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Bayou Dupont Sediment Delivery Marsh Creation #3 and Terracing CWPPRA project BA-164. The proposed action will create a 252-acre marsh platform and two terrace fields in Jefferson and Plaquemines Parishes. The project will have a beneficial effect and will not significantly adversely affect the environment. The FONSI and EA will be made available on the Division website and by Notice of Availability. **Barbara Aldridge, 665-2712; Karen McCormick, 665-8365**

GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM QAPP DELEGATION: The Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) was reapproved for delegation of its Quality Assurance Project Plan delegated for a term of five years. This means that the GBEP and the Texas Commission on

Environmental Quality provide an effective QA program with internal and external audits to ensure that a high quality is maintained, and past audits by EPA have shown them to have an exceptional program in place. The delegation is one of three in Region 6. The first delegation occurred in 2004, and it was renewed three times. **Doug Jacobson, 665-6692; Sala Senkayi, 665-7170E**

CWPPRA RPT MEETINGS: Representatives of EPA's Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) team participated in the Priority Project List 25 (PPL25) Regional Planning Team (RPT) Meetings in Lafayette, Houma, and Lacombe, Louisiana on January 27-29, 2015. The RPT meetings provide the opportunity for the nomination for new candidate projects for inclusion on the CWPPRA PPL. The EPA CWPPRA Team is presenting 13 project proposals. The CWPPRA program is currently in its 25th year of planning. **Adrian Chavarria, 665-3103; Brad Crawford, 665-7255; Sharon Osowski, 665- 7506**

CLIMATE PEER LEARNING EXCHANGE: A newly formed group of environmental managers from the Municipalities throughout the State of Texas requested climate change presentations from the EPA Regional office. On January 28, 2015, two members of the Region 6 Clean Energy and Climate Change team attended the group's first conference at Dallas City Hall. The EPA presentations were on climate change air mitigation hot topics and on climate change adaptations for water resources. The latter presentation offered an overview of the science behind an array of water-related effects of climate change and featured a number of modeling and planning tools available through the Climate Ready Utilities Program and the Climate Ready Estuaries Program, as well a number of other adaptation modeling and planning resources. **Rob Lawrence, 665-6580; Barbara Keeler, 665-669**

PLANNING & ANALYSIS BRANCH

ENERGY MANAGEMENT: Staff from the Planning and Analysis Team and the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center at the University of Texas in Arlington conducted an energy assessment at the Lakeview Regional Water Reclamation Plant in Lake Dallas on January 29 and 30, 2015. Energy audit data was entered in the EPA Energy Use Assessment Tool to show the plant uses approximately \$300,000 on energy costs, with blowers in the aeration process accounting for half of this cost. One recommendation from this assessment is for the utility to reduce the amount of air being generated in the aeration process, resulting in lower energy consumption at the plant. **David Reazin, 665-7501**

2015 BINATIONAL WATER CONSERVATION CONFERENCE: Planning continues for the 2015 Binational Water Conservation Conference to be held on February 19-20, 2015, in Laredo, Texas. The City of Laredo, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (Partnerships and Communications Team and the Border Program, El Paso) held a conference call on Tuesday, February 3 to finalize discussions on the conference logistics, speakers and booth exhibition. Due to limited travel funding, EPA Region 6 Border Program has agreed to host the WaterSense/water conservation exhibit and to distribute the water education materials at the conference. Over 200 "Save the Date" postcards announcing Fix a Leak week were forwarded to the City of Laredo for the registration packets. Next committee call is scheduled for Tuesday, February 10. **Debora Browning, 655-8025**

ECHO DISTRIBUTION PIPELINE PROJECT (SIMS BAYOU) TX0134019, JANUARY 28, 2015: A member of the Surface Water Center worked with geospatial data to determine the critical conditions and flows for the Echo Distribution Pipeline Project (Sims Bayou) oil and gas

NPDES Permit. Outfall 001 discharged into Sims Bayou, a tributary of the Houston Ship Channel / Buffalo Bayou Texas Segment 1007. The critical conditions and flow information will be used to define Permit requirements for the facility in question. **Bob Kirkland, 665-6798**

REVIEW OF THE HEADQUARTERS GEOPLATFORM ODMDS SPATIAL DATA, JANUARY 27, 2015: A member of the Surface Water Center compared Region 6 ODMDS Spatial Data to a collection of data from EPA Headquarters, which was located on the Geoplatform. The review identified errors with location depths and calculated areas. The results of this review were provided to Jessica Franks of Ecosystems Branch, so they could be forwarded on to EPA Headquarters and used to update the existing data. **Bob Kirkland, 665-6798**

LOWERING THE COST AND SIMPLIFYING THE TASK OF WATER QUALITY MONITORING: A member of the Surface Water Center collaborated with a member of the Ecosystems Protection Branch on the analysis and mapping of monitoring stations in Louisiana. As a result of the analysis, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) may be able to avoid the cost and simplify the task of measuring stream flow during water quality sampling of about 22 stations, because they already have real time monitoring and online data access provided by the US Geophysical Survey (USGS). **Angel Kosfiszer, 665-2187; Robert Cook, 665-7141**

PRODUCTION FOR INDUCED SEISMICITY POSTER: Staff from the Planning and Analysis Branch provided graphic design and large-format printing/mounting support for a new poster designed by Source Water Protection Branch to convey essential information on the topic of induced seismicity. The 32"x 40" poster will serve as a visual aid for external presentations to a variety of audiences and also for presentations within the Region 6 office. **John Stadelman, 665-7394**

CONSULTATION ON TECHNICAL DESIGN FOR WEBINARS: Staff from the Planning and Analysis Branch provided technical information on webinar design in an effort to enhance participation in public meetings related to NPDES permitting. The intent is that the use of distance communications technology would expand public participation in the hearings and also allow greater EPA involvement. Issues related to technical setup, internet connections, public comment management, and support from the Region 6 office were discussed so that a sustainable model could be identified and implemented. **John Stadelman, 665-7394**

JUDGING AT THE NORTH DALLAS REGIONAL ELEMENTARY SCIENCE FAIR IN GARLAND: Members of the Surface Water Center participated as Judges in the North Dallas Regional Elementary Science Fair in Garland, TX. The Science Fair participants come from the Allen, Carrollton-Farmers Branch, Garland, McKinney, Mesquite, Richardson, and Plano School Districts. Students compete by grade, and 3 grand prizes are awarded for each school. **Angel Kosfiszer, 665-2187; Robert Kirkland, 665-6798**

NEW WATERSENSE PARTNERS: As a result of WaterSense marketing efforts, as of February 4, 2014, Region 6 has six new partners to join the WaterSense Program. **The new partners include four Promotional Partners:** North Central Texas Council of Governments, City of Murphy, Milligan Water Supply Corporation, The Woodlands Township; **and, two Builders:** Northwest Regional Housing Authority, Crawford/Sebastian Community

Development Council. For FY15, Region 6 has enlisted six new partners and currently has 157 WaterSense Partners. **Debora Browning, 665-8025**

NPDES PERMITS AND TMDL BRANCH

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE (MRG) WATERSHED BASED MS4 PERMIT: On February 12, 2015, EPA Region 6 Water Quality Protection Division Director, Bill Honker, and NPDES Permits and TMDL Branch staff will meet with the Phase I and Phase II Albuquerque Urbanized Area (UA) permittees. The meeting agenda includes a Q/A session to discuss the process to submit Notice of Intents (NOIs), implementation of Stormwater Management Plans and TMDLs. During the same trip, two meetings will be held with the Pueblo of Sandia and the Pueblo of Isleta to continue discussing the municipal stormwater waiver options under Phase II regulations at 40 CFR 122.32(d) and (e). **Nelly Smith, 665-7109**

UPDATE ON THE ILLINOIS RIVER WATERSHED AND LAKE TENKILLER MODELING PROJECT: Region 6 has received and commented on drafts of the Illinois River Watershed Nutrient Modeling Model Calibration and Validation report as well as the Lake Tenkiller hydrodynamic model calibration and validation report. Region 6 has also received the drafts of the associated sensitivity and uncertainty analyses. Based on the comments, the Lake Tenkiller documents have been revised, while the revised Illinois River documents have been delayed and are expected February 16, 2015. An external peer review is anticipated to start in early March. Additionally, the baseline model runs have been received, which allows EPA to begin identifying reduction scenarios. **Taimur Shaikh, 665-7181**

CONFERENCE CALL WITH THE TEXAS: Representatives of the NPDES Permits & TMDL Branch participated on a conference call with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) on February 3, 2015, to discuss programmatic permitting issues. Items discussed included, but were not limited to, TCEQ's implementation strategy for establishing temperature limits in TPDES permits; backlog of Phase I MS4 permits; status of unresolved permit interim objections; and permit conditions to address bacteria from non-human sources. The EPA continues to work with the TCEQ on coming to closure on these issues in the immediate future. **Kilty Baskin, (214) 665-7500; Michael Carrillo, (214) 665-7381; Rudy Molina (214) 665-6731; and Paul Kaspar, (214) 665-7459**

CALL WITH OWM WATER PERMITS DIVISION ON 2011 PERMIT QUALITY REVIEW (PQR): On February 4, 2015, representatives of the NPDES Permits and TMDLs Branch (6WQ-P) participated in an EPA Headquarters lead teleconference to discuss a path forward on a legacy Headquarters-lead PQR that focused on Louisiana and Texas from 2011. The PQR report has yet to be finalized, and EPA HQ was seeking input on how to best introduce the report to the States as much has changed since HQ conducted its visit. A streamlined approach has been developed by HQ that includes an executive summary and list of action items that HQ feel conveys the necessary information. The Region and **Claudia Hosch, 665-6464; Paul Kaspar, 665-7459; Kilty Baskin, 665-7500; Rudy Molina, 665-6731; and Kay Schwab, 664-6635.**

STORMWATER WORKGROUP: EPA Region 6 has established a cross-sectional stormwater workgroup within the NPDES Permits and TMDL Branch. The group has established a SharePoint Site to develop and share information. The group plans to develop regional expectations for states to help take the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Program into the future

and ultimately improve the quality of the receiving water bodies. **Monica Burrell, 665-7530; Nelly Smith, 665-7109; Suzanna Perea, 665-7217; and Nasim Jahan, 665-7522.**

THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY SUBMITS A MODIFIED NPDES PERMIT FOR TYSON'S - GRANNIS PROCESSING FACILITY:

On January 30, 2015, the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) submitted final revisions for a modification to Tyson's National Pollutant Elimination Discharge System (NPDES) permit. The changes constitute a major modification providing for redistribution of a nitrate wasteload allocation (WLA) established by the Rolling Fork TMDL. The redistribution will be taken from the margin of safety built into the TMDL and is not expected to have any effect on the overall loading established for Rolling Fork. Redistribution of the load will be addressed by an update to the State's Water Quality Management Plan and will be public noticed in conjunction with the draft modified permit. EPA plans to issue a no objection letter for the modification by the end of the week. **Mike Tillman, 665-7531; Miranda Hodgkiss, 665-7538.**

EPA CAMPUS RAINWORKS CHALLENGE: June 2014, EPA announced the 3rd annual Campus RainWorks Challenge, created to engage college/university students in an interdisciplinary approach to site design and water resources management using green infrastructure (GI) systems to reduce stormwater pollution and build resilience to climate change. EPA received 60+ entries by the December 2014 deadline and began an in-house Round 1/Screening. A representative of the Region 6 Stormwater staff was asked to participate in Round 2 of the judging process. Thirteen expert judges from American Society of Landscape Architects, the Water Environment Federation, the American Society of Civil Engineers and EPA reviewed and scored qualifying student entries from January 13-28, 2015. Sixteen entries will advance to the Round 3 judging process and winners will be announced April 2015. **Suzanna Perea, 665-7217**

APPROVAL OF UPDATES TO THE OKLAHOMA WATER QUALITY

MANAGEMENT PLAN (WQMP): NPDES Permits Branch personnel have reviewed the Waste Load Allocation report for the City of Skiatook and Town of Sperry and technically accepted for projected effluent limit updates. These updates will become part of the WQMP Updates after completion of its public participation process, certification by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, and approval by the EPA. **Syed Shahriyar, 665-2783; Taimur Shaikh, 665-7181**

SOURCE WATER PROTECTION BRANCH

LUCITE BEAUMONT PETITION REISSUANCE UPDATE: The petition reissuance final approval package was signed on February 5th. The public comment period for this decision was from December 18th until February 2nd and no comments were received. This reissuance for Lucite's two hazardous waste injection wells is adding new injection intervals, increasing the allowable density range of the wastestream, increasing the maximum allowable injection volume, adding allowable waste codes for the wastestream and lengthening the operational life of the injection wells until December 31, 2030. Lucite's plant, which is located in Nederland, Texas (near Beaumont), manufactures Hydrogen Cyanide, Acrylonitrile, Methyl Methacrylate, Methacrylic Acid and other specialty chemicals used in polymers and plastics. **Ken Johnson, 665-8473; Brian Graves, 665-7193**

EPA REGION 6 WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DIVISION AND THE CITY OF BATON ROUGE & EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH SIGN MOU: EPA and the City of Baton Rouge and the East Baton Rouge Parish signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will make the Federally Funded Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) project review process more efficient. Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish now have a clearer understanding of what projects overlying the SSA have the potential to contaminate the aquifer and need to be submitted to EPA for a project review and response. This should reduce the time spent on project submittal and review in the Baton Rouge area by approximately 25%. **Mike Bechdol, 665-7133**

GROUND WATER/UIC SECTION STAFF TO ATTEND NATIONAL UIC MEETINGS: The 20th annual Ground Water Protection Council Underground Injection Control (UIC) Conference will be held in Austin on February 10th and 11th. Attendees will include EPA HQ and Regional staff (including Peter Grevatt, OGWDW Director), industry, States, environmental consultants and environmental groups. Sessions will include discussions of injection induced seismicity and aquifer exemptions. The Ground Water/UIC Section Chief will make a presentation in the injection induced seismicity session on the soon to be released EPA UIC National Technical Workgroup report on minimizing and managing the potential impacts of injection induced seismicity from Class II disposal wells. Associated with this conference there will be a working meetings held February 9th. The IOGCC/GWPC Induced Seismicity Working Group will meet to further their work on a product they are developing. Region 6 is represented on this group and will be attending that meeting. There will also be a meeting of the EPA UIC National Technical Workgroup and Region 6 workgroup members will be attending. **Phil Dellinger, 665-8324; Nancy Dorsey, 665-2294; Ken Johnson, 665-8473; Brian Graves, 665-7193**

STMV'S LA PALANGANA AQUIFER EXEMPTION EXPANSION APPLICATION: As a follow-up to our conference call with TCEQ on January 9th, Region 6 received supplemental information of the South Texas Mining Venture (STMV)-proposed La Palangana aquifer exemption expansion in Duval County, Texas from TCEQ on January 30th, 2015. These include geophysical logs that address the mineral producibility of the production area authorization PAA-5, plugging records of an old domestic water well, and other pertinent data. We anticipate to complete our review and make the determination of the approval of this proposed aquifer exemption expansion within the next few weeks. **Phil Dellinger, 665-8324; Lisa Pham, 665-8326**

QUARTERLY EPA REGION 6 AREA WIDE OPTIMIZATION PROGRAM MEETING (VIRTUAL MEETING): Three members of the EPA Region 6 Area Wide Optimization Team (AWOP) participated in the quarterly Region 6 AWOP virtual meeting from February 3-4. This virtual meeting was attended by the states of New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas along with representation from EPA Region 7 and EPA Technical Support Center using Adobe Connect. Discussion topics during the conference call centered on states providing a summary of their AWOP activities conducted in 2014, planning for the National AWOP meeting in July, along with a presentation on conducting water storage tank sampling. **Jose Rodriguez, 665-8087; Jatin Mistry, 665-7483; Nancy Ho, 665-3179**

THE GROUND WATER/UIC SEISMICITY TEAM MEETS WITH SMU PROFESSOR: On Friday, February 6th, the chief of the Ground Water/Underground Injection Control program and select staff members, along with an attorney from ORC, met with Dr. Matt Hornbach from Southern Methodist University to discuss general approaches to evaluating the potential for UIC

disposal wells to be linked to earthquakes. Dr. Hornbach is working on an academic paper evaluating earthquakes near Azle, Texas, and whether they may be a result of induced seismicity due to Class II (oil and gas wastes) disposal wells, and requested a meeting with EPA to discuss his approach. **Phil Dellinger, 665-8324; Mike Overbay, 665-6482; David Gillespie, 665-7467**

WHAT DO EARTHQUAKE REPORTS REALLY MEAN: Ground Water/UIC staff gave a Regional Science Council presentation titled, ‘Was that an earthquake? What does all this mean?’ on February 5. The Irving earthquakes were used as an example, to illustrate the interpretation and accuracy of earthquake reporting. **Nancy Dorsey, 665-2294**

GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM OFFICE

PLANNING MEETING WITH GMPO AND REACH STAFF TO DEVELOP CONSERVATION PRACTICES TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY: On February 3rd, Gulf of Mexico Program (GMPO) Science Team Members participated in a planning meeting with Mississippi State University’s (MSU) Research & Education to Advance Conservation & Habitat (REACH) program staff in Jackson to improve and expand the outputs of REACH in Southern Mississippi. The goal of REACH is to create a network in Mississippi of sites with variable practices to illustrate the success of conservation practice implementation on landscape stewardship while encouraging profitable and sustainable systems. The planning Committee selected two demonstration sites:

1. Diamondhead Golf Course is implementing several Best management practices (BMP) on 9 holes that will result in improving water quality in a local watershed. The Course is located in Hancock County. REACH staff will monitor the watershed for nutrient reductions to show the success of the BMPs and offer outreach programs to other golf courses in Southern Mississippi.
2. A Tree Nursery in Stone County was also selected to show how the BMPs it is implementing will reduce nutrients in its watershed.

The REACH Coordinator, is processing results of previous sampling events and will provide initial analysis to the GMPO Science Team Lead, Troy Pierce this week. These results will provide indications of monitoring performance and insight to determine future needs. GMP plans to attend the training and roll out monitoring equipment in the near future.

Staff Contacts: Jerry Boos and Tripp Boone

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH: On February 2nd, GMPO staff met to plan and prepare for several March and April 2015 environmental education and outreach training presentations. The specific events are: March 5th: Gulfport High School Career Fair; March 20th: South Louisiana Home School Career Fair; April 11th: Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Event. There is also an ongoing once/week event called the Hancock County (Mississippi) Youth Development Camp C.A.R.E. This outreach occurs each Wednesday from January 28th – May 6th, for one hour. Each of the afore-mentioned events is uniquely different; yet all center on environmental issues like clean water and healthy habitats. In almost all cases, there are grade- or age-appropriate hands-on demonstrations to plan and gather materials; plus, interactive lectures and/or slide presentations. The GMPO staff regularly meet for these planning sessions which also includes reviewing available in-house educational materials & determining

whether additional resources are needed. All GMPO outreach events are tracked to inform/substantiate performance measure target reporting (annual basis).

Staff Contacts: Lael Butler, Tripp Boone, Kaitlin Cooper, Jeanne Allen, Jerry Binninger, Jerry Boos

RESTORE ACTIVITIES: GMPO hosted regular bi-weekly conference call for EPA RESTORE Team on Tuesday, January 27th. The call focused on summarizing the RESTORE Council Steering Committee options under consideration on the timing of when NEPA / and other environmental compliance must be completed in the overall funding decision process (e.g. – Draft FPL, grant, IA), and on EPA’s NEPA exemption for its proposals.

EPA provided the NEPA Compliance Summary to the RESTORE staff on February 4th for one of its proposals (NEP/LPBRP). The Summary documents EPA’s NEPA exemption for the actions contemplated in the proposal. EPA will submit NEPA Compliance Summaries for the other proposals that were submitted to RESTORE. Additionally, EPA is developing a white paper, at the request of the Council, which will summarize limitations that EPA would apply if the Council wanted to consider utilizing EPA’s NEPA exemption on other projects.

Staff Contact: John Bowie

RESTORE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKGROUP MEETING: On January 29th, the RESTORE Public Engagement Workgroup met with Justin Enrenwerth, Executive Director, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council at the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERRS) to discuss plans for engaging and educating the public. The meeting centered on work accomplished, i.e. the development and activation of the RESTORE Website and options for strengthening public engagement. The workgroup presented the concept of a Draft Communications Plan that will potentially inform how to engage with the public (i.e., developing materials for varying audiences) and the level of engagement and education needed for meaningful input. After conferring with the RESTORE Council, Mr. Ehrenwerth will be providing guidance on expectations of the workgroup. **Staff Contacts:** Keala Hughes and LaKeshia Robertson

GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE (GOMA) COASTAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE MEETING: GMPO representatives participated in GOMA’s Coastal Community Resilience (CCR) Team Winter meeting in Baton Rouge, LA on Feb. 4-6th. The purpose of the meeting is to review and discuss CCR related projects ongoing in the region and to conduct a strategic planning session focused on the next Blueprint that is being developed by GOMA. Representatives from all five states, EPA, NOAA, DOI, and FEMA attended. **Staff Contact:** John Bowie

LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN INTERAGENCY CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP MEETING: On February 4th, The GMPO Chief Scientist participated in the Lower Mississippi River Basin Interagency Conservation Partnership meeting in Vicksburg, MS. At this meeting, the partners completed targeting of watersheds in which to conduct best practices to improve water quality and habitat. Interagency partners include: US Fish & Wildlife Service, Army Corps, US Geological Survey, EPA and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. **Staff Contact:** Troy Pierce

PUBLIC SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES: On February 4th and 5th staff participated in various Career Fairs and Science Fairs at both the

Longbeach High School in Longbeach, MS and at Pearl River Community College in Poplarville, MS. **Staff Contacts: Jerry Binninger and Tripp Boone**